15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

aboriginal dialect than for several hundred nomads to learn English, I arranged with two youths to teach me. But until I constantly practised the local dialect on them I found that they were learning English much faster than I was learning their tongue. In their anxiety to learn English, they said that it would be quicker for me to teach them than for me to bother to learn aboriginal; moreover, I would eventually go back to my own people, and they would then have to start all over again and teach my successor.

If good English is spoken to the aboriginal he learns it with an ability and speed that makes the use of pidgin English absurd. No one knows where pidgin English originated, but the term 'pidgin' is thought to be a Chinese corruption of the word 'business'. Through the years there has been a local fungus-development of an Australian pidgin-jargon, in which occur such travesties of speech as 'blackfellow', 'gin', 'lubra', 'thinkin', 'savvy', 'sitdown', 'alonga', and 'gammon'; and these in turn have been reinforced by still more hybrid phrases and transplanted by traders throughout the South Pacific.

At Goulburn Island where a school had been established for twenty years, a Government doctor was making an inspection and singled out an old woman for further attention. Turning to her son, the doctor loosed a flood of pidgin which I failed to follow, but I gathered that he wanted to know how long her fingers had been doubled up. The heavy silence was broken by the boy saying, in perfectly modulated English: 'I beg your pardon, doctor?' Fortunately the medico had a sense of humour and his laughter cleared the way for a successful inquiry in English. Recently a naval patrol vessel anchored off Goulburn Island, and an officer questioned a youth in pidgin. The boy said in surprise: 'Excuse me, sir, are you a "new Australian"?'

In writing the dialect, I found that several English consonants were not needed and the ordinary alphabet had to be